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THE

ACADEMICK SPORTSMAN;

OR, A

WINTER's DAY:

A

POEM.

By the Rev. GERALD FITZGERALD,
Fellow of Trinity College, DUBLIN.

DUBLIN, Printed:
LONDON, Reprinted for E. Johnston, Ludgate Street;
and S. Bladon, Pater-noster Row. MDCCLXXIII.

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TO

SIR FIELDING OULD.

SIR,

AS I have been informed that a Poem without a Dedication would appear as ſolitary in the world as a ſportſman without a companion in the field; I have taken the liberty of chuſing your name to attend it in its progreſs, as I know your attachment to the rural Muſe. I have beſides, Sir, a ſtill ſtronger motive to juſtify this addreſs, which is an earneſt deſire of embracing any opportunity however unimportant, of teſtifying my ſincere affection for a long approved, and a long reſpected friend.—With regard to the Poem itſelf, the ſubject, as far as I can learn, is new,—or at leaſt exhibited in the mode of novelty; how far the dreſs may become it, depends upon the diſcernment

cernment of the public eye. If they can derive any degree of pleaſure from the peruſal, adequate to that which I have frequently received from the practice of the ſubject, I am ſufficiently rewarded, as I have no other concern for its ſucceſs than what the wiſh to pleaſe muſt neceſſarily inſpire.

I am, SIR,

With the greateſt Eſteem,

Your much obliged Friend,

and moſt obedient Servant,

GERALD FITZGERALD.

TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN,
February 4, 1773.

THE

Academick Sportſman, &c.

——*Studio fallente laborem.*

THE feather'd game that haunt the hoary plains,
When ice-bound winter hangs in cryſtal chains,
The mimick thunder of the deep-mouth'd gun
By lightning uſher'd, and by death out-run,
The ſpaniel ſpringing on the new-fall'n prey,
The friend attendant, and the ſpirits gay;
Theſe are the ſcenes which lur'd my earlieſt days,
And ſcenes like theſe continue ſtill to pleaſe.

Oft when I've ſeen the new-fledg'd morn ariſe,
And ſpread its pinions to the polar ſkies,
Th' expanded air with gelid fragrance fan,
Brace the ſlack nerves, and animate the man;
Swift from the college, and from cares I flew,
(For ſtudious cares ſolicit ſomething new)

From

From tinkling bells that wake the truant's fears,
And letter'd trophies of three thouſand years;
Thro' length'ning ſtreets with ſanguine hopes I glide,
The fatal tube depending at my ſide;
No buſy vender dins with clam'rous call,—
No rattling carriage drives me to the wall;
The cloſe-compacted ſhops, their commerce laid,
In ſilence frown like manſions of the dead—
Save, where the ſooty-ſhrowded wretch cries "*ſweep*,
Or drowſy watchman ſtalks in broken ſleep,
'Scap'd from the hot-brain'd youth of midnight fame,
Whoſe mirth is miſchief, and whoſe glory ſhame—
Save, that from yonder ſtew the batter'd beau,
With tott'ring ſteps comes reeling to and fro—
Mark, how the live-long revels of the night
Stare in his face, and ſtupify his ſight!
Mark the looſe frame, yet impotently bold,
'Twixt man and beaſt, divided empire hold!—
Amphibious wretch! the prey of paſſion's tide,
The wreck of riot, and the mock of pride.

But

But we, my friend, with aims far diff'rent borne,
Seek the fair fields, and court the bluſhing morn;
With ſturdy ſinews, bruſh the frozen ſnow,
While crimſon colours on our faces glow,
Since life is ſhort, prolong it while we can,
And vindicate the ways of health *to man.*

To yonder vales that ſpread beneath the hills,
Where MILTOWN river winds with murm'ring rills,
Onward our courſe diverſify'd we bend,
And right and left, with anxious care attend;
The poring ſpaniel, ſtudious as he goes,
Scents ev'ry leaf that on the margin grows,
Sudden he ſtops!—he eyes the plaſhy ſpring!
The frighted ſnipe darts upward on the wing,
With ſhrill-ton'd pipe implores the paſſive air,
In vain! for death e'en perſecutes him there—
Another ſprings! but happier in his flight,
'Scapes the loud gun, and vaniſhes from ſight.

The ſport begun, and panting ſtill for breath,
With arms recruited for the work of death,
Pleas'd we behold the gay tranſparent gleam
Of frozen lake, that ſkirts the purling ſtream,
With inlaid figures, and moſaic wrought,
With margin rich, and lucid pendants fraught—
'Till lively *Ranger* chides our long delay,
Gambols around, then forward ſprings away.

Heav'n! what delights my active mind renew,
When out-ſpread nature opens to my view,
The carpet-cover'd earth of ſpangled white,
The vaulted ſky, juſt ting'd with purple light;
The buſy blackbird hops from ſpray to ſpray,
The gull, ſelf-ballanc'd, floats his liquid way;
The morning breeze in milder air retires,
And riſing rapture all my boſom fires,
In incenſe wafted to the throne on high,
To him who form'd the earth—the air—the ſky,

Who

Who gives me health and vigour to enjoy,
Guides me e'en now, and guarded when a boy—
Accept, great God! the fervour of my pray'r,
And as before, continue ſtill thy care,
Oft as I view thee in creation's dreſs,
Be mine to praiſe thee, as 'tis thine to bleſs.

While fervid flights my lifted fancy takes,
The wary woodcock ruſtles thro' the brakes,
With haſty pinions wings his rapid courſe,
'Till death purſues him, arm'd with double force;
Each gun diſcharg'd, and conſcious of its aim,
Aſſerts the prize, and holds the dubious claim;
'Till chance decides the long conteſted ſpoil,
Proclaims the victor, and rewards his toil.

His luckleſs fate, immediate to repair,
The baffled ſportſman beats with forward care,
Each buſh explores, that plats the hedge with pride,
Brooks at its feet, and brambles at its ſide—

Another bird, juſt flushing at the ſound,
Scarce tops the fence, then tumbles to the ground.

Ah! what avails him now the varniſh'd die,
The tortoiſe-colour'd back, the brilliant eye,
The pointed bill, that ſteer'd his vent'rous way
From Northern climes, and dar'd the boiſt'rous Sea;
To milder ſhores in vain theſe pinions ſped,
Their beauty blaſted, and their vigour fled.

Thus the poor peaſant, ſtruggling with diſtreſs,
Whom rig'rous laws, and rigid hunger preſs,
In weſtern regions ſeeks a milder ſtate,
Braves the broad ocean, and reſigns to fate;
Scarce well arriv'd, and lab'ring to procure
Life's free ſubſiſtence, and retreats ſecure,
Sudden! he ſees the roving INDIAN nigh,
Fate in his hand, and ruin in his eye——
Scar'd at the ſight, he runs, he bounds, he flies,
'Till arrow-pierc'd, he falls—he faints—he dies,

 Unhappy

Unhappy man! who no extreme could ſhun,
By tyrants baniſh'd, and by chance undone;
In vain! fair virtue fan'd the free-born flame,
Now fall'n alike to fortune and to fame.

But why, my muſe! when livelier themes I ſought,
Why change the rural ſcenes to ſober thought?
Why rouſe the patriot ardour in my breaſt,
Uſeleſs its glow, when FREEDOM droops depreſt?
Not mine to combat lux'ry's lordly ſtride,
My humble lot forbids th' aſpiring pride,
Forbids to ſtop depopulation's hand
That cruſhes induſtry, and frights the land,
That robs the poor of half their little ſtore,
And inſurrection ſpreads from ſhore to ſhore.

Theſe to prevent, be ſtill the ſtateſman's end,
And this the taſk of Sov'reigns to attend;
Be mine the care, to range this ample field,
Try what its ſprings, and what its thickets yield,

Purſue

Purſue the game that to the ſkies aſpire,
And purge the Æther with ſucceſſive fire,
Spring o'er the fence that bars my active mind,
And rouſe my friend that ling'ring ſtays behind,
Guard the ſteep bank, to catch with eager pains
The forward bound, that ſcarce the margin gains;
Or loudly laugh, when diligently nice,
He backward ſlides, and bumps the crackling ice.

Oh friendſhip! name for ever lov'd, ador'd,
Thou richeſt gift, which heaven for man has ſtor'd!
To me more dear, congenial to my breaſt,
Than all the hoards, and honours of the Eaſt;
When ere thro' life's more arduous paths I bend,
Be there to guide, and aid me to my end;
Or when the ſports of rural ſcenes I try,
With converſe ſweet, each interval ſupply;
In all extremes of buſineſs or of eaſe,
Be there to comfort, and be here to pleaſe;

Unlock

Unlock the ſluices of my flowing heart,
And to its courſe thy genial warmth impart,
Augment its ſtream, refine it as it flows,
'Till fair creation its clear current ſhews—
May no rude paſſions toſs it into foam,
Nor reſtleſs commerce on its boſom roam;
But chear'd by bright'ning ſcience may it run,
No cares to ruffle, and no rocks to ſhun;
Or glide ſequeſter'd thro' SYLVANUS' ſhades,
The flocks of PAN, and FLORAS' flow'ry meads,
While the pleas'd MUSES, with auſpicious ſmile,
Breathe paſt'ral muſic, and the time beguile.

And thou, dear ſpaniel! friend in other form!
Obſequious come, thy duty to perform,
Whoſe fond affection ever glows the ſame,
Lives in each look, and vibrates thro' thy frame;
And thou, dear pointer! never devious ſtray,
But ſearch the plains inquiſitively gay,

With

With length'ned ſide, and ſapient noſe inhale
The floating vapour of the ſcented gale—
Oft have I ſeen thee, when the balanc'd year
By LIBRA weigh'd rewarded CERES' care,
Thro' new-ſhorn fields with active vigour bound,
Snuff the freſh air, and traverſe all the ground;
Or cautious tread, and ſtep by ſtep ſurvey,
With keeneſt attitude, the tim'rous prey;
Then ſtatue-like, with liſted foot proclaim
The PARTRIDGE near, and certify the game—
Where ere I range, whatever ſports purſue,
Be ſtill attendant, and be ſtill in view.

Now had the ſun, in noontide robes array'd
Of fleecy clouds, the ſubject world ſurvey'd;
Onward we move, to gain the mountain's * ſide,
That Eaſt and Weſt attends in ſolemn pride,
With lofty head that breathes the gelid gale,
Brow-beats the city, and o'erlooks the vale;

* That part of the Wicklow Mountains which lies about three miles to the ſouth of Dublin.

Adown

Adown its face the trickling riv'lets run,
Spread at its feet, and bathe them in the ſun:
Theſe to diſcloſe, we trace the rugged ſoil,
And many a ſhot repays the pleaſing toil;
'Till tir'd at length with new-diſcover'd game,
We mark the courſe reſerv'd for future fame.

As when the SPANIARDS, with unceaſing pains,
Thro' CHILI rov'd to CHARCAS' barren plains,
Approach'd POTOSI's arduous height that boaſts
The richeſt treaſures of the ſouthern coaſts;
The latent veins they labour to explore
Of pregnant mines that teem with ſparkling ore,
With riſing rapture ſpring them into day,
And fluſh'd with pleaſure, plan their future ſway.

The day advanc'd, and waning to the Weſt,
Demands a thought for reſpite and for reſt,

Back to the city calls a ſudden eye,
Where vary'd beauties all in proſpect lie;
The pointed ſteeples menacing the ſkies,
The ſplendid domes, that emulouſly riſe;
The lowly hamlets ſcatter'd here and there,
That ſcarcely ſwell to breathe refreſhing air;
The hedge-row'd hills, and intermingled vales,
The diſtant villas fan'd by floating gales;
And eaſtward ſtill, the wide extended main
By commerce cover'd, awes the ſolemn ſcene.

Theſe to behold, may pleaſe the vacant mind,
More pleaſing far the cottage of the hind,
That yonder ſmokes, by ruſſet hawthorn hedg'd,
By hay-yard back'd, and ſide-long cow-houſe edg'd:
Oft have I there my thirſt and toil allay'd,
Approach'd as now, and dar'd the dog that bay'd;

The

The ſmiling matron joys to ſee her gueſts,
Sweeps the broad hearth, and hears our free requeſts,
Repels her little brood that throng too nigh,
The homely board prepares, the napkin dry,
The new-made butter, and the raſher rare,
The new-laid egg, that's dreſs'd with niceſt care;
The milky ſtore, for cream collected firſt,
Crowns the clean noggin, and allays our thirſt;
While crackling faggots bright'ning as they burn,
Shew the neat cupboard, and the cleanly churn;
The plaintive hen, the interloping gooſe,
The lamkin *dear* that friſks about the houſe—
The modeſt maiden riſes from her wheel,
Who unperceiv'd a ſilent look would ſteal;
Call'd ſhe attends, aſſiſts with artleſs grace,
The bloom of nature flushing on her face,
That ſcorns the die, which pallid pride can lend,
And all the arts which luxury attend.

With fuel laden from the brambly rock,
Lo! forward comes the father of his flock,
Of honeſt front:—ſalutes with ruſtick gait,
Remarks our fare, and boaſts his former ſtate,
When many a cow, nor long the time remov'd,
And many a calf his ſpacious paſture rov'd,
'Till riſing rents reduc'd them now to three,
Abridg'd his farm, and fix'd him as we ſee:
Yet thanks his GOD, what fails him in his wealth
He ſeeks from labour, and he gains from health:
Then talks of ſport; how many wild-ducks ſeen!
What flocks of widgeon too had fledg'd the green!
'Till ev'ry 'PRENTICE dar'd the city ſhun,
Range the wide field, and lift the level gun.

While thus amus'd, and gladden'd with our lot,
The haſty ev'ning calls us from the cot;

A ſmall

A ſmall gratuity dilates their heart,
And many a bleſſing follows as we part.
Nor you, ye proud! diſdain their ſtate to hear,
The ſtate of nature crowns their frugal cheer;
Tranſmitted pure from PATRIARCHAL times,
By art unfaſhion'd to corruption's climes—
To you unknown their labours and their race,
Alike unknown their innocence and peace;
Secure from danger, as remov'd from fame,
Their lives calm current flows without a name.

With limbs refreſh'd, with lively tales and gay,
We homeward haſte, and guile the tedious way;
Each object view in wintry dreſs around,
And eye the dogs that wanton o'er the ground;
The penſive red-breaſt on the leafleſs bough,
And juſt beneath, the fragrance-breathing cow;

While

While ſtill more grateful, with her cleanly pail,
The ruddy milkmaid hears a tender tale
From the lov'd ſwain, who ſwells th' alternate ſigh,
Leans on his ſtaff, and lures her ſide-long eye,
With artleſs guiſe, his paſſion to impart,
With looks that ſpeak the language of his heart—
Her's was the ſweetneſs of the milk ſhe preſs'd,
And *his* the fervour of the ſweets careſs'd;
A DAPHNE *ſhe*, with rural grace attir'd,
A DAMON *he*, with faithful love inſpir'd:
Thrice happy pair! whom guiltleſs joys adorn,
Pure as the eve, and conſtant as the morn;
No pride-born cares, to fruſtrate or controul
Your mutual vows reſponſive to the ſoul,
'Till ſacred HYMEN binds the nuptial band,
And blends your lives, a bleſſing to the land.

Hence,

Hence, contemplation lifts th' internal eye,
Fix'd on the love of PROVIDENCE on high,
That ſtill impartial thro' the world extends
In bounteous bleſſings vary'd to their ends;
From the rich UKRAIN to SIBERIA's ſnow,
Adapted ſweets in ev'ry climate grow;
The rude TONGUSIAN, quiver'd for the chace,
Feels joys unknown to PERSIA's ſplendid race,
Thro' wilds immenſe purſues the ſavage brood,
At once his pride, his raiment and his food;
No diff'rence proves, but what from fancy ſprings,
'Twixt tented TARTARS, and empalac'd Kings—
But ſoon the viſionary ſcene withdraws,
And active ſports ſolicit new applauſe,
For yonder come—yet diſtant to the eye,
The vagrant PLOVER wafted thro' the ſky;

Swift

Swift to the hedge, on diff'rent ſides we run,
That ſkirt the copſe, and hide the deadly gun;
Onward they move regardleſs of their ſtate,
A ſingle guide conducts them to their fate,
The ſudden thunder burſts upon their head,
The foremoſt fall, and all the reſt are fled.

Thus were its foreſts NIAGARA ſpreads,
And wild OSWEGO all its horror ſheds,
The ſons of BRITIAN march'd in vent'rous pride,
No foe to front them, and no caution guide,
'Till ev'ry tree with hidden rage conſpires,
And ev'ry ſhrub emits deſtructive fires;
What could they do? or where the vengeance fly?
They wheel—they drop,—and all or run or die;
The gun relentleſs no compaſſion ſhews,
And no reſpect of diff'rent objects knows;

Alike

Alike regardleſs, when its fury's ſtir'd,
Of man or beaſt—a BRADDOCK or a bird.

But while I thus its dire effects attend,
'Tis man alone muſt anſwer for the end;
The gun, like riches, claims no genuine uſe,
But juſt as rul'd, will good or bad produce,
Whether it rolls the raging tide of war,
Or only frights the tenants of the air,
For empire level'd, or for health careſs'd,
The motive, not the mean, is curs'd or bleſt.

Now had the twilight, veil'd in gloomy gray,
Mourn'd the departure of retiring day,
A darker hue the face of nature wears,
And ſcarce diſtinct the diſtant town appears—
Back to our mind, in ſwift ſucceſſion throng
(To cheat the time and ſteal the road along)

The various ſports of all the ſummer paſt,
When ling'ring, long-vacation came at laſt;
Imagination fondly ſports to tell,
How many grouſe! how many partridge fell!
And quick tranſports me, gladden'd as I go,
Where the proud GAULTIES ‡ lift their awful brow,
Oft did I there with lively ſpirits run,
Mount on their back to meet the riſing ſun,
When toiling, panting, labour-ſpent and ſlow,
I ſtop'd to breathe:—And view'd the plains below,
And thee, dear village! ‖ loveliеſt of the clime,
Fain would I name thee, but I can't in rhime,
Where firſt my years in youthful pleaſures paſt,
And where in age I hope to die at laſt;
Fain would I dwell upon thy native charms,
Thy verdant hills and cultivated farms—

‡ A range of mountains in the county of Tipperary.

‖ Tipperary.

But

But ſudden rous'd, I ſee the pointers *wind*,
My brother-ſportſman preſſing cloſe behind,
The grumbling heath-cock feels an inſtant wound,
Adown he falls, and whirs againſt the ground—
Again, methinks I ſee the ſervice ſpread,
The cold proviſions on the cakes of bread, §
The mountain ſtream, of babling accents nigh,
My couch the heath, my canopy the ſky,
ÆNEAS-like, I eagerly devour
The plates themſelves †—the quarter'd cakes of flower,
Like him ariſe new conqueſts to purſue,
Then end my toil and tell of all I knew.

So at the cloſe of toilſome, hardy life,
The vet'ran ſoldier brags of glorious ſtrife,

§ ——Adorea liba per herbam
Subjiciunt epulis, &c. VIR: ÆN. VII. 110.

† ——Maliſq. audacibus orbem
Fatalis cruſti, patulis nec parcere quadris;
Heus! etiam Menſas conſumimus inquit Iülus, IBID.

What dangers paſt, what cities he had ſeen,
What battles fought, when thouſands ſtrew'd the green,
'Till fancy-warm'd he ſeems to fight them o'er,
And tir'd at laſt, he braves and boaſts no more.

Bleſt with the view of STEPHENS-GREEN at laſt,
Amuſive fancy paints its pleaſures paſt;
Where ſhady walks entice the noontide gale,
And whiſp'ring lover's ſoftly-ſighing tale;
The ogling belle, the pert and powder'd beau,
And dame delighted pretty miſs to ſhew;
The trader trim, that ſtruts with vacant air
To catch the breeze, or captivate the fair—:
But now no more FLORILLUS glads the green,
LUCINDA's gone, and deſolates the ſcene.

The riſing moon, with delegated ſway,
Supplies the radiance of the diſtant day,

Reveals

Reveals the various objects that we meet,
And all the buſy tumults of the Street—
With head-long pace the vagrant *hawker* ſcours,
And *bloody news* from lungs horrific pours,
The dull, diſcordant ballad-notes annoy,
That mock the croud, with love's fantaſtick joy;
The cumb'rous coach, with blazon'd pomp that ſhews
Where pamper'd pride, and indolence repoſe;
While cloſe behind, the ſhiv'ring female ſtrays,
Parted from virtue, innocence and eaſe—
She once the darling of her mother's arms,
Her father's pride, and bleſt with blooming charms,
Thro' all the village known for ſpotleſs fame,
Fair was her beauty, fairer ſtill her name;
'Till the ſly tempter urg'd inſidious ſuit,
And lur'd her weakneſs to forbidden fruit;
There periſh'd grace, her guardain honor fled,
And ſad remembrance mourns each bleſſing—dead!

Expell'd

Expell'd the paradiſe of native ſway
She wanders now to ev'ry vice a prey—
A prey to yonder terror of the night,
(Avert, ye Gods! ſuch monſters from my ſight)
The bully dire: whoſe front the furies ſwell,
And ſcars diſhoneſt mark the ſon of hell—
In vain! ſhe ſhrinks to ſhun his luckleſs pace,
Aw'd by the terrors of his vengeful face;
To ſcenes TARTAREAN, ſee! the wretches hie,
Where drench'd in vice, they rave—or rot—or die.

Heav'n! how unlike the pure, the tranquil ſcene,
Where rural mirth, and rural manners reign;
Where ſimple cheer diſclaims the cares of wealth,
And freſh'ning gales diffuſe the glow of health;
Where undiſturb'd, unenvy'd, unconfin'd,
Calm reaſon rules each moment of the mind;

Where

Where mock'd ambition ſeeks her laſt retreat,
And proves the world, a bubble or a cheat.

Thro' clam'rous ſtreets at length by caution led,
Lo! ALMA MATER rears her rev'rend head,
Unfolds the portals of her awful courts,
Where nurs'd by ſcience, future FAME reſorts—
Pleas'd we behold the bright'ning fuel blaze,
And hot repaſt that gives content and eaſe;
While keeneſt appetites a zeſt beſtow,
Which liſtleſs luxury can never know;
The cloth remov'd, with bleſſing for our fare,
We next the jug of cordial punch prepare;
Or purple claret ſparkling as we pour,
Nectareous juice! to chear the ſocial hour,
When toil declining claims refreſhment's ſmiles,
And mirthful innocence the time beguiles.

With

With conſcious joy our nets we then review,
And all the conqueſts of the day renew,
Boaſt of our ſkill, and palliate where it fails,
For ev'n in trifles human pride prevails—
Nor to ourſelves the feather'd ſpoils confine,
But range them round for friendſhip's ſacred ſhrine;
The rural bliſs redoubles in our breaſt,
In pleaſing others when ourſelves are bleſt:
Nor you, my friends! diſdain what we adore,
We give with pleaſure, and would give you more;
Our off'ring take, and as we wiſh ſurvey
The grateful produce of a WINTER's DAY.

FINIS.